1iGriffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

304 775 776 789 exceedingly important that the hands and the arms should be tattooed. In case the body is buried, the tattoos, as another group told us, save the body; for when *Baimata*, a female demon, comes to devour it she cannot eat any of the tattooed portions, and thus much more is left to go to Bhagawan.[1]

304 531 789

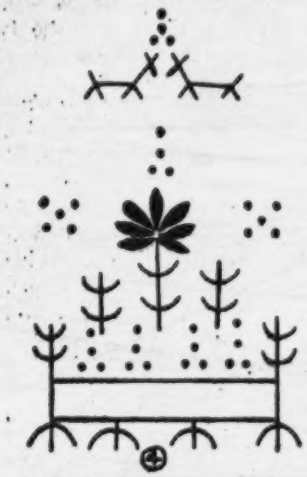

Fig. 13

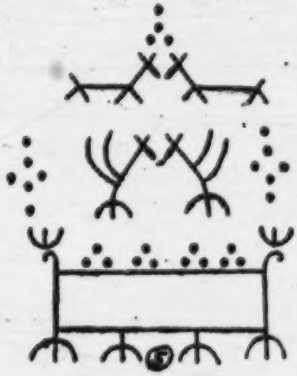

Fig. 14

304 789 Tattooing also wards off the evil eye, to which women, especially when with child, are very susceptible. As stated above, it has also a medical significance, in that it keeps the organs healthy and functioning properly. The tattooings about the ankle are a protection against snake bite.

000 The art of tattooing is probably of Polynesian origin and its widespread practice among Munda tribes may be due to their common racial affinities.

304 It was noted above that Kols say that *Bajigars* do their tattooing. *Bajigar* literally means a 'juggler', 'actor'. Russell and Hiralal know nothing of this group unless it be the same as *Bajgari*, a subcaste of *Gandas*. The latter are wandering musicians and are considered unclean. It is not unlikely that Kols make use of other groups for tattooing but the available information is not conclusive on this point. The [386] term *godnari* means simply "one who tattoos." The colours usually used are blue and black, and the operation is often a painful one. The

1 See Briggs, G. W., *The Chamars*, p. 148.

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basis of the black colour is soot. Sometimes this is obtained by burning certain kinds of wood and cocoanut shells. It is finely powdered and mixed with water. Sometimes milk from the breast is said to be a desirable solvent. After pricking, the parts are oiled with a mixture of *haldi* and *til* oil, which soothes the affected parts and removes any impurity from the touch of the tattooer.

Fig. 15

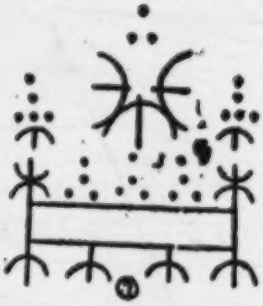

Fig. 16

AGRICULTURE. Kols mostly work as labourers in the fields of others, and even where they rent their fields, there is nothing in their methods which is not characteristic of the whole countryside. February to April is the usual slack season, although during the latter part of this period the wheat crop is harvested in Central India, and the threshing season is on. Before the rains at the end of June the ground is made ready for the first showers, and is roughly scratched with rude ploughs. Just before the rains the seed is broadcast in a prepared plot and is transplanted in the mud after the monsoon has broken. Only men sow the seed. From July to September the rice is growing and must be weeded and looked after. The weeding is generally done by women, but men also help. In October the rice is cut and threshed and stored. The soil, still moist from the monsoon rains, is now prepared for the wheat crop which is sown about the end of October or early in November. The wheat also requires weeding and care, and is ready for the harvest in late March and April. Religious observances in connection with agriculture are described in a later chapter.

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roof is formed by bamboo branches covered with banana leaves. Around the upper edge of the *marhwa* is hung a frieze of mango twigs. Mango leaves are always found in connection with Kol weddings; they do not wither easily and are a symbol of everlastingness and stability. Stripe of paper, usually coloured red, are used for decoration. The ground under the *marhwa* is carefully levelled and plastered with cowdung and in the very centre a hole twelve to eighteen inches deep is dug. This is where the central pole will be placed. Before the pole is lowered into position a *supari* nut (*Areca catechu*), some pieces of *haldi* (usually five) and two-pice coins are placed in the pit, and according to some accounts, rice coloured with *haldi* is also thrown in. The *magrohan* is a piece of wood three to four feet in length and two to four inches in diameter. It should preferably be green wood, though a dry pole is used if a fresh one is not available. It is coloured red with *sendur* or yellow with *haldi* and has some thread, coloured either white or yellow, wrapped about it seven times from the top to the bottom. Along with the *magrohan* a short green bamboo stick is fixed together with a green *gular* branch and the iron bar used in digging the holes for the booth. If the central post should be of *gular* or other wood a bit of *saleh* must be inserted with it. The *saleh* is a symbol of fertility, being an evergreen tree which never withers and takes root easily and quickly; even an apparently dry stick will sprout. After the *magrohan* has been put in place it is reverently circuited by the builders seven times in a clockwise direction and then *sendur* and cowdung are applied. The sacred pole stands at the centre of the wedding observances and at that time is surrounded by the articles now to be mentioned. Their position is indicated in figure 21 on the next page.

1. The *magrohan*.
2. A *hulao* (earthenware pot) filled with water. In the water there are mango leaves which are allowed to protrude at the top and over the top is placed a *dip* or earthenware lamp.
3. A *sil* (grinding stone) on which are placed the following articles noted in the sub-heads:
   a. A *lorha* (stone roller)—which the bridegroom will use to roll over the pice and disturb their arrangement.
   b. Husked rice, which is sprinkled over the surface of the *sil*.
   c. Seven pice coins which are laid in a row on top of the rice.
   d. Seven bits of wood, each a different kind.
   e. A whole *supari* nut.
   f. *Haldi* water is sprinkled over the whole.
4. A branch of *gular* or *palasa* (*Butea frondosa*) buried near the *magrohan*. In a crotch of the same will be inserted a small earthen pot containing *haldi*, *supari* nut and two pice.

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(wedding crown) is removed. He then turns to his bride and takes off a portion of the *sari* covering her head and sees her features for the first time. She immediately covers her head again. This is repeated seven times but after the seventh he does not again remove the covering, and it is said that henceforth her head is to remain covered to the day of her death if he outlives her, and to the day of his death if she becomes a widow. A *sari* cloth is now brought and is wrapped about the boy and girl; in the seclusion of this the boy puts some *sendur*, with the little finger of his right hand, on the girl's forehead indicating that she is now a married woman. The first three fingers should on no account be used. The Brahmin now takes his leave, for his work is done, and he is paid a fee usually amounting to Rs. 1-4-0.

The boy soon comes out of the house and greets his friends and tells his party that it is time for them to retire to the *janmasa*. Before they are allowed to depart, however, they are invited to a feast close to the *marhwa*. Their feet are again washed and a feast, as lavish as can be managed, is given them. At least the following should be provided: rice, pulse, *bara*, *puris*, curds, spices and sweets. Sometimes there is drinking but the Kols are not much addicted to this. The bridegroom begins the feast by taking the first mouthful; then the others may start. Usually they eat seated in a circle on the ground and are entertained at the time by singing and dancing. The bridegroom is paid four annas for starting things off and the rest of the night is spent in this manner.

(c) *Bida* (or *bidai*): The Return of the Bridegroom to his House. The returning party leaves the girl's village on the third day. About noon on that day there is another feast, the final one, which is only for the members of the departing company, except that the bridegroom's *sar* (brother-in-law) also eats with them. The groom refuses to eat until his mother-in-law promises him a gift such as a goat or a cow. The bridegroom is also presented with the gifts which were made to the couple and these are handed over to his *swasa* to keep for him. The men of both parties embrace and put a *tika* of *sendur* on one another, each man waving a pice over the head of another and then presenting it to him. *Ilachi* (cardamom), *pan* and *supari* are distributed.

The women now appear in a group and the mother-in-law puts lamp black under the eyes of the boy's father and also sprinkles a bit of *haldi* water over him. The other women do the same to the remaining members of the bridegroom's party. A bit of lac on a string is sometimes tied about their necks. The boy's father drops a rupee into

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If, during a worship period, a *baus* does not come when it should be expected, ashes are sprinkled over the worshipper. Probably some demon is near, and the spirit of the *devi* will not enter as long as a *bhut* is about, and this will frighten him away. A person who is ill, or who is facing some danger, may come, make an offering, and sprinkle ashes over himself, saying the magical words *"ochha, ochha."*

11. *A Grass Bundle* (*Chhahur*). This is the magic grass, and provides shade, shelter, and protection to *devis*. The *chhahur* is composed of stalks of wheat or some other sacred grass like *kans* (*Saccharum spontaneum*), *kusa* (*Poa cynosuroides*) or *urai* (*Vetivera zizanoides*) tied in a bundle to the end of a bamboo stick. These bits of grass are taken from thatch roofs of the houses in the village, usually one stalk from each house. Thus each house honours the deity and will therefore be protected. At times of smallpox or cholera this is a very effective procedure, and one or two stalks are brought from each house and tied together by the *panda* and set up. Each family which gives the grass is thus protected. Strings of red, yellow and black beads are usually hung about the *chhahur*. They give the household added protection as the *devis* are still more pleased.

12. *Flowers*. Marigold (*Tagetes erecta*), and *Tulasi* (*Ocymum sanctum*) plants are nearly always seen in connection with Kol shrines. The marigold is a sacred plant and is usually found in connection with Hindu worship, while *tulasi* plants are often found there too. At Kaimur, Kali lived in a *tulasi* plant and black bangles were hung upon it to indicate that fact.

13. *Bangles* (*Churi*). Bangles, being a feminine adornment, are always found at Kol shrines. These are usually red, yellow or black in colour, and they seem to be used with discrimination. They may be tied on a pole or on a *nim* tree, or fastened to some part of the furnishings of the shrine.

14. *Vermilion* (*Sendur*). Red lead is very necessary in worship. It was seen how it stimulated Mahabir into action. *Devis* like it, and it is also a devil scarer and helps to protect the shrine.

15. *Mounds* (*Pinda*). It is not infrequently found that there are one or more mounds raised on the mud platform to represent *devis* and to be their dwelling place. These are generally whitewashed once a week. At Kaimur, one was for Khermai and the other for Mari *devi*; at Benda Bhainsokhar was worshipped this way.

16. *Earthenware Vessels* (*Ghara*). These are not always found, but during the hot season are usually hung either in the tree or on a pole over the shrine. Sometimes liquor is kept in them. This is pleasing to the goddesses, especially Kali. Sometimes water is kept

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778 in these vessels, and a tiny hole pierced in the bottom so that the water
[271 drops over the shrine. This is popular in warm weather when the
776] *devi* should be cooled and the dripping water is pleasing to her.

17. *Tinsel* (*Tika*): Women often place a small round dot made
[302] of lac tinsel on the centre of their foreheads. It is usually of red colour. These bits of tinsel are used in the shrines as well, and are stuck on it here and there. The *devis* like them and they help to attract them to the shrine.

18. *Stone* (*Patthar*). Bits of stone, usually pieces rounded in the bed of streams and longish in shape, are often found somewhere about the shrine. This may be an imitation of the *Salagrama* stones found
[831] in connection with the worship of Vishnu. Sometimes they are of *lingam* type such as used in the worship of Siva.

This sums up the items usually found in Kol shrines. Probably no shrine we saw had all these components, though the Kaimur shrine came nearest to it. In addition to the above, there was at Kaimur
[823] an unusual feature. This was a flat stone which had apparently come from some ancient Hindu temple and on which two figures were carved.
[782 The *panda* of the shrine claimed that it was brought from Rewa and that the figures represented Sharda and Kalki. The stone must have
789] weighed about eighty pounds, but, it was claimed, if a *hom* offering were performed when it was moved, it became very light and was
[386] easy to transport. It was coloured red with *sendur*. It will have been noticed how imperfectly anthropomorphized the godlings are, and that no special images are required.

The only Kol shrine which had brick walls and a roof was found on the outskirts of Katni. The room measured about five feet square inside, was four feet high, and had a flat roof. This was called the shrine of Khermai, although on the flat top Barmai was said to dwell.
[824] Also tongs were there for Sannyasi *deo*. The usual bundle of *kans* grass (*Saccharum spontaneum*) was on top of it.

778 The offerings, the lighting of the lights and the placing of the necessary parts, are all in the hands of the *panda*. It is not part of his
793 work, however, to keep the shrine clean and properly plastered. This is the duty of the women of the village, and they take turns in doing it. The shrine is plastered at least once a week and cleaned oftener. The sweepings, including ashes, dust, bits of cocoanut shells and the like, are not swept to the ground beside the shrine, but are carefully put into a basket by the woman who is doing the work. If they should be thrown out upon the earth, evil will result, so they are carried to a stream or a tank and thrown into the water. They are sacred ashes, likened unto the ashes following a cremation and must be respected.

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in this way, all is well; but if they get angry, they will trouble the people who have neglected them. 778 782

THE HOME SHRINE. Shrines found at the homes are much simpler than the village shrines and are found either inside or just outside the house, or in both places. Those outside the house are placed in the front wall facing the courtyard, and the wall of the house is a part of the shrine. Sometimes a little hole is made in the wall to shelter the *devi* when it rains. These shrines may be dedicated to any of the *devis* mentioned in the preceding pages—Asmanimai, Kalimai, Khermai, Marimai and Shardamai being the most commonly worshipped outside the house. One finds flags above, and also below; the iron trident; black and other kinds of bangles; a *salagrama* stone; *sendur* marks and the like. Iron lashes and strings of beads are not uncommon. 778

The place reserved within the dwelling for the household goddess, or god is even simpler. There is a niche in the wall from four to six inches above the floor. Within the niche is found a *salagrama* stone or some iron symbol reddened with *sendur*. Vermilion is also daubed on the wall round the niche. The floor space immediately below the deity is plastered with cowdung. A small trident usually leans against the wall at one side of the shrine; there is a *dip* which is lighted at dusk, when the women of the house prostrate themselves before the shrine. As was noted, both kinds of shrines are usually found. If the house is just a hut of branches, and there is no earthen wall, symbols of the deities will be found on the floor in one of the corners. The house shrine is generally called *dewahar* or *dewala*. [386] [237] [782]

DEVI POSSESSION. (*Bawa*). The phenomenon of spirit possession is fairly common among certain of the lower classes. The Kols also practise this. The trance occurs before the village shrine and is usually induced only at the time of the *Jawara* festivals, which come at the spring and autumnal equinox. It may be resorted to on other occasions if there seems to be a case of extreme necessity. The actual trance is induced partly by the singing and the beating of drums, at which Kols are so adept. The person seeking the *bawa* takes his place before the *devi* and after a period of concentration and emotion begins to tremble, then shout, beat himself upon the ground, and becomes in appearance a totally different person. During this time he will answer questions put to him by persons seeking guidance, who believe that it is not he that is answering them, but the spirit at that time resident in him. During this period, the one under the possession of the *devi* is practically insen- 787 [533] [151]